

Creation of Trilateral and Quadrilateral Cooperative Posture The Japan-USA Alliance as a lever

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The Japan-USA Alliance is now in a matured phase; however, there are still several problems to be resolved. In this article, I will focus on future roles of the alliance which are expected to act as core elements in both North East Asian and the world security.

There are two major security subjects which would impact regional and global security, as I explain below.

1. Creation of a practical cooperative posture among Japan, USA and ROK.

Today, there are two independent bilateral alliances, Japan-USA and South Korea (ROK)-USA; however, due to a lack of coordination mechanism between these two alliances, harmonized military action, in case of regional security crises and military incidents, is very difficult or impossible.

Currently, two independent alliance postures, which have only limited and perfunctory coordination function, should be expanded into more practical and capable postures to better cope with possible future regional contingencies.

This improved trilateral cooperative posture has other significance toward a rapidly emerging China, as a fundamental security framework among three nations which share common values and national interests.

2. Quadrilateral confidence- and security-building with China

With regard to security affairs with China, steady and sufficient military build-ups among three nations – Japan, USA, and ROK -- should be the bases and prerequisite for a stable relationship with China.

Along with this, firm and reliable confidence- and security-building among four nations -- Japan, USA, ROK and China will be indispensable for stable and prolonged security stability. In order to establish this confidence- and security-building, independent attempts by each nation should be the last measure to take. Instead, our three nations should coordinate together and exercise an orchestrated approach to China by fully taking advantage of existing alliance mechanism as well as the trilateral coordination framework which I mentioned above.

The above-stated two cooperative security postures would surely become the ideal stabilizers in regional security, and engaging mechanisms with China, in most of all possible future scenarios. Especially, from trilateral relationship and strategic points of view, the most important factor for Japan and ROK is that a contingency in the Korean Peninsula could affect Japan, and that a contingency in Japan could affect ROK. Any other regional contingencies could affect the two nations and USA as well. Also, the USA, having independent alliances with each country, will respond to any contingency involving either state. In such a case, it will expect the two nations to cooperate and coordinate together. Functional coordination among three nations will surely be a key to the successful measures to end the crisis.

At the same time, when three nations will handle China-related issues, the trilateral cooperative posture will provide these nations with a tremendous amount of flexibility – both in carrot and stick sense.

Here, the Japan-USA Alliance should be re-defined as the best lever to materialize these two thoughts, which would influence future security postures in the region, and that of the world as well. In this context, navy to navy cooperation, which has so many common agendas to discuss and to act on will be a primary and most-promising means to these ends.